Irises

poems by
Christopher Hewitt

(for Joe on his birthday)

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BLUE

Most common
and taken for granted,
we have a history,
before the fancy varieties arrived.
We have seen it all —
from Victorian Gardens
to bare parking lots.
We have worked hard
to please. Now we are weary,
preferring the blue mist
of evening — our camouflage;
Our secret scent is sweet;
You will remember us
despite yourself.

SMALL WHITE

I brighten up any arrangement,
Little princess,
Star accessory at the party,
I flutter with freedom,
I sparkle with laughter.

BROWN

The jaded handkerchieves
of Vincent Price and Clifton Webb;
Alone, we are always in good taste,
but in groups (Watch out!)
We linger evilly;
We are lofty queens
hatching some plot
(you may be sure).

PURPLE

In scrapbooks and diaries
you find us —
Keepsakes of the heart.
We jolt your soul
like old *amours* —
the *déjà vus* of love.

YELLOW

I blaze, but subtly:
Hold me as you would a candle
In the rooms of night.
I am endearing.
I shed a gentle light.
But beware! If you drop me,
I will burn the house down!

BEARDED

The peculiar beauty of dried blood,
we are seasoned travelers.
In ancient China's pavillions
the mandarins grew us —
memories of long-gone dynasties.
You can trust us, though.
We have the wisdom
of recovering criminals.

SIBERIAN

Not as frail as we look,
we've outlived many climates.
We are loners —
Don't fall for us.
We move on
to decorate fields you've never seen,
bright green counties
of which you've never heard.

BLACK

The deepest red imaginable,
rare and expensive,
we smolder in corners,
but love to make heads turn;
We have the hearts of ravens:
Our petals are wings.

LARGE WHITE

The older bride,
not quite pure,
and certainly not virginal,
but what do a few blemishes matter?
I made it up the aisle didn't I?—
And I am gorgeous!

FLAGS

We hide out in the reeds,
and sway among them
as in choruses
men sway against each other
in time to the showtunes.
We have a secret:
We are the lovers you've
been waiting for.
We welcome you home.

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